Isolated Speeches of Inez

INEZ: Where's Florence? Didn't you hear? I asked you about Florence. Where is she?

INEZ: Ah, that's the way it works, is it? Torture by separation. Well, as far as I'm concerned, you won't get anywhere. Florence was a tiresome little fool, and I shan't miss her in the least.

INEZ: You? Why, the torturer, of course.

INEZ: Not "Mrs." I'm unmarried.

INEZ: They look frightened.

INEZ: Laugh away, but I know what I'm talking about. I've often watched my face in the glass.

INEZ: That's your affair. Must you be here all the time, or do you take a stroll outside, now and then?

INEZ: I'm not polite.

INEZ: Your mouth!

INEZ: Can't you keep your mouth still? You keep twisting it about all the time. It's grotesque.

INEZ: That's just what I reproach you with. There you are! You talk about politeness, and you don't even try to control your face. Remember you're not alone; you've no right to inflict the sight of your fear on me.

INEZ: What would be the use? There was some point in being afraid before, while one still had hope.

INEZ: That's so. Well? What's going to happen?

INEZ: Would you prefer mine?

INEZ: Did you hear, Mr. Garcin?

INEZ: And I'm Inez Serrano. Very pleased to meet you.

INEZ: You're very pretty. I wish we'd had some flowers to welcome you with.

INEZ: Yes. Last week. What about you?
INEZ: Did you suffer much?

INEZ: What was it?

INEZ: The gas stove.

INEZ: Estelle!

INEZ: No need. My life's in perfect order. It tidied itself up nicely of its own accord. So I needn't bother about it now.

INEZ: Yes, after midnight. They've sealed up my room. It's dark, pitch-dark, and empty.

INEZ: Oh, I don't care much for men any way.

INEZ: What's that you said?

INEZ: Yes, a charming old friend— with a hole in the middle of his face.

INEZ: Because you amuse me with your "flukes. "As if they left anything to chance! But I suppose you've got to reassure yourself somehow.

INEZ: Never. I shouldn't have forgotten you.

INEZ: Not likely.

INEZ: What's their job?

INEZ: I didn't. I was a post-office clerk.

INEZ: Mere chance? Then it's by chance this room is furnished as we see it. It's an accident that the sofa on the right is a livid green, and that one on the left's wine-red. Mere chance? Well, just try to shift the sofas and you'll see the difference quick enough. And that statue on the mantelpiece, do you think it's there by accident? And what about the heat here? How about that? I tell you they've thought it all out. Down to the last detail. Nothing was left to chance. This room was all set for us.

INEZ: And do you think I lived in a Second Empire drawing-room?

INEZ: Yes. And they've put us together deliberately.

INEZ: Ask me another! I only know they're waiting.

INEZ: Well, do it. Do it if you can. You don't even know what they expect.
INEZ: But I know nothing, absolutely nothing about it. I'm as much in the dark as you are.

INEZ: If only each of us had the guts to tell—

INEZ: Estelle!

INEZ: What have you done? I mean, why have they sent you here?
INEZ: Is that all you have to tell me?

INEZ: Yes, I see. Look here! What's the point of play-acting, trying to throw dust in each other's eyes? We're all tarred with the same brush.

INEZ: Yes, we are criminals—murderers—all three of us. We're in hell, my pets; they never make mistakes, and people aren't damned for nothing.

INEZ: In hell! Damned souls—that's us, all three!

INEZ: A damned soul—that's you, my little plaster saint. And ditto our friend there, the noble pacifist. We've had our hour of pleasure, haven't we? There have been people who burned their lives out for our sakes—and we chuckled over it. So now we have to pay the reckoning.

INEZ: Well, well! Ah, I understand now. I know why they've put us three together.

INEZ: Wait! You'll see how simple it is. Childishly simple. Obviously there aren't any physical torments—you agree, don't you? And yet we're in hell. And no one else will come here. We'll stay in this room together, the three of us, for ever and ever...In short, there's someone absent here, the official torturer.

INEZ: It's obvious what they're after—an economy of man-power—or devil-power, if you prefer. The same idea as in the cafeteria, where customers serve themselves.

INEZ: I mean that each of us will act as torturer of the two others.

INEZ: Agreed.

INEZ: Don't worry. I've a glass in my bag. It's gone! They must have taken it from me at the entrance.

INEZ: What's the matter?

INEZ: You're lucky. I'm always conscious of myself—in my mind. Painfully conscious.
INEZ: Suppose I try to be your glass? Come and pay me a visit, dear. Here's a place for you on my sofa.

INEZ: Oh, he doesn't count.

INEZ: Do I look as if I wanted to hurt you?

INEZ: Much more likely YOU'LL hurt ME. Still, what does it matter? If I've got to suffer, it may as well be at your hands, your pretty hands. Sit down. Come closer. Closer. Look into my eyes. What do you see?

INEZ: But I can. Every inch of you. Now ask me questions. I'll be as candid as any looking-glass.

INEZ: Don't worry about him. As I said, he doesn't count. We're by ourselves. ..Ask away.

INEZ: Show! No, they're a bit smudgy.

INEZ: That's better. No. Follow the line of your lips. Wait! ! I'll guide your hand. There. That's quite good.

INEZ: Far better. Cruder. Your mouth looks quite diabolical that way.

INEZ: Won't you call me Inez?

INEZ: You're lovely, Estelle.

INEZ: I HAVE your taste, my dear, because I like you so much. Look at me. No, straight. Now smile. I'm not so ugly, either. Am I not nicer than your glass?

INEZ: And why shouldn't you "tame" me? Listen! I want you to call me Inez. We must be great friends.

INEZ: Not with postal clerks, you mean? Hullo, what's that-- that nasty red spot at the bottom of your cheek? A pimple?

INEZ: There.. .You know the way the catch larks— with a mirror? I'm your lark-mirror, my dear, and you can't escape me. ..There isn't any pimple, not a trace of one. So what about it? Suppose the mirror started telling lies? Or suppose I covered my eyes— as he is doing— and refused to look at you, all that loneliness of yours would be wasted on the desert air. No, don't be afraid, I can't help looking at you. I shan't turn my eyes away. And I'll be nice to you, ever so nice. Only you must be nice to me, too.

INEZ: Very much indeed.
INEZ: Of course! Because he's a MAN! You've won. But look at her, damn it! Don't pretend. You haven't missed a word of what we've said.

INEZ: Not in me, perhaps— but how about this child? Aren't you interested in her? Oh, I saw through your game; you got on your high horse just to impress her.

INEZ: So you say. But all the time you were making up to him, trying every trick to catch his attention.

INEZ: To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I feel you there, in every pore. Your silence clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out— but you can't prevent your being there. Can you stop your thoughts? I hear them ticking away like a clock, tick-tick, tick-tick, and I'm certain you hear mine. It's all very well skulking on your sofa, but you're everywhere, and every sound comes to me soiled because you've intercepted it on its way. Why, you've even stolen my face; you know it and I don't! And what about her, about Estelle? You've stolen her from me, too; if she and I were alone do you suppose she'd treat me as she does? No, take your hands from your face, I won't leave you in peace— that would suit your book too well. You'd go on sitting there, in a sort of trance, like a yogi, and even if I didn't see her I'd feel it in my bones— that she was making every sound, even the rustle of her dress, for your benefit, throwing you smiles you didn't see.... Well, I won't stand for that, I prefer to choose my hell; I prefer to look you in the eyes and fight it out face to face.

INEZ: You know already. There's nothing more to learn.

INEZ: No need to tell us that. We know you were a deserter.

INEZ: Why did you hurt her like that?

INEZ: No. Nobody admired me.

INEZ: You brute!

INEZ: Well, I was what some people down there called "a damned bitch." Damned already. So it's no surprise, being here.

INEZ: No. There was that affair with Florence. A dead men's tale. With three corpses to it. He to start with; the she and I. So there's no one left. I've nothing to worry about; it was a clean sweep. Only that room. I see it now and then. Empty, with the doors locked.... No, they've just unlocked them. "To Let." It's to let; there's a notice on the door, that's — too ridiculous.

INEZ: Three.

INEZ: Yes.
INEZ: He? No, he hadn't the guts for that. Still, he'd every reason; we led him a dog's life. As a matter of fact, he was run over by a tram. A silly sort of end... I was living with them; he was my cousin.

INEZ: Fair? You know, I don't regret a thing; still, I'm not so very keen on telling you the story.

INEZ: Quite gradually. All sorts of little things got on my nerves. For instance, he made a noise when he was drinking— a sort of gurgle. Trifles like that. He was rather pathetic really. Vulnerable. Why are you smiling?

INEZ: Don't be too sure... I crept inside her skin, she saw the world through my eyes. When she left him, I had her on my hands. We shared a bed-sitting-room at the other end of the town.

INEZ: Then that tram did its job. I used to remind her every day: "Yes, my pet, we killed him between us." I'm rather cruel, really.

INEZ: No, you're not cruel. It's something else.

INEZ: I'll tell you later. When I say I'm cruel, I mean I can't get on without making people suffer. Like a live coal. A livek coal in others' hearts. When I'm alone I flicker out. For six months I flamed away in her heart, till there was nothing but a cinder. One night she got up and turned on the gas while I was asleep. Then she crept back into bed. So now you know.

INEZ: Yes? What's in your mind?

INEZ: Obviously. But what matter?

INEZ: You know quite well. The man you were so scared of seeing when you came in.

INEZ: Did he shoot himself on your account?

INEZ: He shot himself because of you.

INEZ: Hateful? Yes, that's the word. Now get on with it. That fellow who killed himself on your account— you were his mistress, eh?

INEZ: He danced the tango like a professional, but he was poor as a church mouse- that's right, isn't it?

INEZ: That's it. You laughed at him. And so he killed himself.

INEZ: Yes.
INEZ: Poor child! So the hearing's over. But there's no need to look like a hanging judge.

INEZ: And what about me? Are you angry with me?

INEZ: Well, Mr. Garcin, now you have us in the nude all right. Do your understand things any better for that?

INEZ: I don't need help.

INEZ: They've let it. The windows are wide open, a man is sitting on my bed. MY bed, if you please! They've let it, let it! Step in, step in, make yourself at home, you brute! Ah, there's a woman, too. She's going up to him, putting her hands on his shoulders. ..Damn it, why don't they turn the lights on? It's getting dark. Now he's going to kiss her. But that's my room, MY room! Pitch-dark now. I can't see anything, but I hear them whispering, whispering. Is he going to make love to her on MY bed? What's that she said? That it's noon and the sun is shining? I must be going blind. Blacked out. I can't see or hear a thing. So I'm done with the earth, it seems. No more alibis for me! I feel so empty, desiccated—really dead at last. All of me's here, in this room. What were you saying? Something about helping me, wasn't it?

INEZ: Helping me to do what?

INEZ: And what do you expect me to do in return?

INEZ: Human feeling. That's beyond my range. I'm rotten to the core.

INEZ: It's no use. I'm all dried up. I can't give and I can't receive. How could I help you? A dead twig, ready for the burning. FLorence was fair, a natural blonde.

INEZ: Perhaps I've guessed it.

INEZ: Yes?

INEZ: I know. And you're another trap. Do you think they haven't foreknown every word you say? And of course there's a whole nest of pitfalls that we can't see. Everything here's a booby-trap. But what do I care? I'm a pitfall, too. For her, obviously. And perhaps I'll catch her.

INEZ: Do I look the sort of person who lets go? I know what's coming to me. I'm going to burn, and it's to last forever. Yes, I KNOW everything. But do you think I'll let go? I'll catch her, she'll see you through my eyes, as Florence saw that other man. What's the good of trying to enlist my sympathy? I assure you I know everything, and I can't feel
sorry even for myself. A trap! Don't I know it, and that I'm in a trap myself, up to the neck, and there's nothing to be done about it? And if it suits their book, so much the better!

INEZ: Don't. I hate being pawed about. And keep your pity for yourself. Don't forget, Garcin, that there are traps for you, too, in this room. All nicely set for you. You'd do better to watch your own interests. But, if you will leave us in peace, this child and me, I'll see I don't do you any harm.

INEZ: Taken whom?

INEZ: Who's Peter?

INEZ: Do you love him?

INEZ: Then why bother about them? What difference does it make?

INEZ: Nothing on earth belongs to you any more.

INEZ: Yes, he was yours— once. But now— try to make him hear, try to touch him. Olga can touch him, talk to him as much as she likes. That's so, isn't it? She can squeeze his hands, rub herself against him—

INEZ: Nothing whatever. Nothing of you's left on earth— not even a shadow. All you own is here. Would you like that paper-knife? Or that ornament on the mantelpiece? That blue sofa's yours. And I, my dear, am yours forever.

INEZ: Now then, Garcin!

INEZ: Oh, I don't count? Is that what you think? But, my poor little fallen nestling, you've been sheltering in my heart for ages, though you didn't realize it. Don't be afraid; I'll keep looking at you for ever and ever, without a flutter of my eyelids, and you'll live in my gaze like a mote in a sunbeam.

INEZ: Estelle! My glancing stream! My crystal!

INEZ: Come to me, Estelle. You shall be whatever you like: a glancing stream, a muddy stream. And deep down in my eyes you'll see yourself just as you want to be.

INEZ: Garcin, you shall pay for this.

INEZ: That's right, fawn on him, like the silly bitch you are. Grovel and cringe! And he hasn't even good looks to commend him!

INEZ: Estelle! Garcin! You must be going crazy. You're not alone. I'm here too.
INEZ: But you promised me; you promised. I'm only asking you to keep your word.

INEZ: Very well, have it your own way. I'm the weaker party, one against two. But don't forget I'm here, and watching. I shan't take my eyes off you, Garcin; when you're kissing her, you'll feel them boring into you. Yes, have it your own way, make love and get it over. We're in hell; my turn will come.

INEZ: Exactly. That's the question. Was that your real motive? No doubt you argued it out with yourself, you weighed the pros and cons, you found good reasons for what you did. But fear and hatred and all the dirty little instincts one keeps dark— they're motives too. So carry on, Mr. Garcin, and try to be honest with yourself— for once.

INEZ: And how did you face death?

INEZ: Green eyes! Just hark to him! And you, Estelle, do you like cowards?

INEZ: What about your wife, Garcin?

INEZ: Dead?

INEZ: Of grief?

INEZ: But she doesn't mean a word of what she says. How can you be such a simpleton? "Estelle, am I a coward?" As if she cared a damn either way.

INEZ: That's right! That's right! Trust away! She wants a man— that far you can trust her— she wants a man's arm round her waist, a man's smell, a man's eyes glowing with desire.
And that's all she wants. She'd assure you you were God Almighty if she thought it would give you pleasure.

INEZ: You won't get far. The door is locked.

INEZ: Don't worry, my pet. The bell doesn't work.

INEZ: Well, my little sparrow fallen from the nest, I hope you're satisfied now. You spat in my face— playing up to him, of course— and we had a tiff on his account. But he's going, and a good riddance it will be. We two women will have the place to ourselves.

INEZ: Where?

INEZ: Well, Garcin? You're free to go.

INEZ: What are you waiting for? Hurry up and go.
INEZ: And you, Estelle? So what? Which shall it be? Which of the three of us will leave? The barrier's down, why are we waiting? But what a situation! It's a scream! We're inseparables!

INEZ: (Struggling with Inez) Estelle, I beg you, let me stay. I won't go, I won't go! Not into the passage.

INEZ: Because of me? All right, shut the door. It's ten times hotter here since it opened. Because of me, you said?

INEZ: Yes, I know. INEZ: Yes.

INEZ: Do you really wish to convince me?

INEZ: Yes, we've lots of time in hand. ALL time.

INEZ: Why not? For thirty years you dreamt you were a hero, and condoned a thousand petty lapses—because a hero, of course, can do no wrong. An easy method, obviously. Then a day came when you were up against it, the red light of real danger—and you took the train to Mexico.

INEZ: Prove it. Prove it was no dream. It's what one does, and nothing else, that shows the stuff one's made of.

INEZ: One always dies too soon—or too late. And yet one's whole life is complete at that moment, with a line drawn neatly under it, ready for the summing up. You are—your life, and nothing else.

INEZ: Now then! Don't lose heart. It shouldn't be so hard, convincing me. Pull yourself together, man, rake up some arguments. Ah, wasn't I right when I said you were vulnerable? Now you're going to pay the price, and what a price! You're a coward, Garcin, because I wish it! I wish it—do you hear?—I wish it. And yet, just look at me, see how weak I am, a mere breath on the air, a gaze observing you, a formless thought that thinks you. Ah, they're open now, those big hands, those coarse, man's hands! But what do you hope to do? You can't throttle thoughts with hands. So you've no choice, you must convince me, and you're at my mercy.

INEZ: Oh, you coward, you weakling, running to women to console you!

INEZ: What a lovely pair you make! If you could see his big paw splayed out on your back, rucking up your skin and creasing the silk. Be careful, though! He's perspiring, his hand will leave a blue stain on your dress.
INEZ: Yes, Garcin, she's right. Carry on with it, press her to you till you feel your bodies melting into each other; a lump of warm, throbbing flesh... Loë's a grand solace, isn't it, my friend? Deep and dark as sleep. But I'll see you don't sleep.

INEZ: Well, what are you waiting for? Do as you're told. What a lovely scene: coward Garcin holding baby-killer Estelle in his manly arms! Make your stakes, everyone. Will coward Garcin kiss the lady, or won't he dare? What's the betting? I'm watching you, everybody's watching, I'm a crowd all by myself. Do you hear the crowd? Do you hear them muttering, Garcin? "Coward! Coward!" —that's what they're saying... It's no use trying to escape, I'll never let you go. What do you hope to get from her silly lips? Forgetfulness? But I shan't forget you, not I! "It's I you must convince." So come to me. I'm waiting. Come along, now. ..Look how obedient he is, like a well-trained dog who comes when his mistress calls. You can't hold him, and you never will.

INEZ: Never.

INEZ: Always.

INEZ: But, you crazy creature, what do you think you're doing? You know quite well I'm dead.

INEZ: Dead! Dead! Dead! Knives, poison, ropes— useless. It has happened already, do you understand? Once and for all. SO here we are, forever.